

OUR TRUST

CHILD FIRST, ASPIRE, CHALLENGE, ACHIEVE

APRIL 2023 | ISSUE 20



THINKING
SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST



TRANSFORMING LIFE CHANCES

WELCOME MESSAGE FROM OUR CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Welcome to the 20th edition of Our Trust! I am delighted to share with you all the fantastic stories and successes that our schools have achieved over the last six months.



Since September, our Trust has come together to support and celebrate five WeAreOne events, from Black History Month, where students and schools pledged to champion equality for all, to World Book Day, which

showed us all that you're never too old to dress up and share your favourite stories. These events never fail to bring us closer together as a family of schools and collectively make a difference in transforming life chances of our young people.

In November 2022, we welcomed Furzeham Primary and Nursery School to the Thinking Schools Academy Trust family. Furzeham became the first primary school in Torbay to join Brixham College and form our 'Torbay Hub'. They have already gone on to win our Trust-wide Easter Rockstars timetable battle too! We expect to see many more great successes and achievements from Furzeham as they continue their journey within the Trust.

We introduced TSTARS, our brand-new staff recognition programme, which allowed us to cast the spotlight on many of our employees and peers. As a Trust, we are committed to fostering a culture of appreciation and gratitude. A simple "thank you" can completely change someone's day. As part of the programme, we celebrated people who have brightened the day-to-day lives of many by receiving a high proportion of Think Ahead mentions. Congratulations to each of our TSTARS in the Trust.

I am over the moon to announce that The Maritime Academy has begun to take shape, as we break ground on building the foundations

of our brand-new school. I am really pleased to see our vision of all-through education in Strood come to life. Both Penbridge Infant school and New Horizons Children's Academy have celebrated building success and opened their new playgrounds for children to explore and enjoy during playtime.

You only have to look through the pages of Our Trust to see our commitment to the holistic development of our students, from the amazing Trust-wide TSArTs project to All Faiths Children's Academy Drama Club. This year we will be starting to measure the impact of our Total Education offer so that we can continue to develop and enhance this provision for our students.

I am astounded by the variety of experiences and opportunities available to our students. So that we can thoroughly reflect on everything we do, we have been developing on how to communicate and recognise this provision in our schools. As a result, we are looking into how to include this in our Total Education journey, which students in our schools will benefit from. Importantly, whilst many of our students are preparing for the return of formal assessments in the form of SATs, GCSEs, A Levels, and a host of vocational qualifications, we must preserve the totality of the experiences and opportunities we offer to help our students develop into the well-rounded, successful young adults we all want them to be.

In addition, the increased emphasis on and reporting of outcomes has reinforced my belief that our vision of providing a broad range of experiences for our students, whilst also achieving their personal best in academic qualifications, is an important part of a child's journey through school.

Please enjoy this edition of Our Trust.

Stuart Gardner

Stuart Gardner, MSc, NPQH, NLE
Chief Executive Officer



Welcome to
our community!

Search for
Thinking Schools Academy Trust

#ProudtobeTSAT #WeAreOne

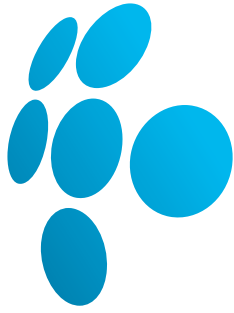


**THINKING
SCHOOLS**
ACADEMY TRUST

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THINKING SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

#WeAreOne

Our Trust celebrates Loud and Proud with our #WeAreOne Events

Since the beginning of the school year, our schools have collectively celebrated five #WeAreOne events that bring our schools together to participate in a number of educational and fun activities for key events throughout the year.

So far, our staff and students have engaged in activities to mark Black History Month, Children in Need, Christmas Golden Tickets, LGBTQ+ History Month and World Book Day.

These events are a brilliant example of unity across the Trust, as they encourage thousands of us across three regions of the country to come together for a greater cause.

Black History Month took place in October 2022 and had the theme 'Action Not Words', which encouraged our schools to think past the quick fixes and lay a foundation for change.

Each school submitted a pledge for equality, diversity and inclusion, along with our trust-wide pledge. Students enjoyed a rich menu of foods celebrating Afro-Caribbean dishes, with the option to take these recipes home to try with their families. The event also saw the return of our Black History Month Art Competition, a fan favourite amongst our students.

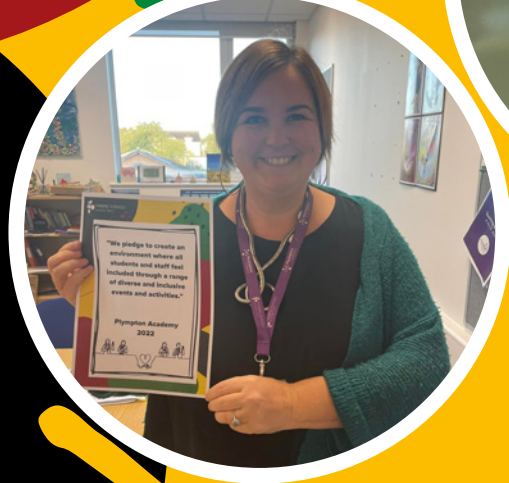


This year, we received more than 300 entries from our schools and, for the first time, welcomed a staff category. The level of creativity and artistic talent was outstanding. The entries were judged and the top three from primary, secondary, and staff were each awarded a prize for their efforts.

Well done to all of the winners; it was truly deserved.



BIM 2022




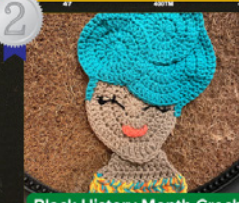
Primary Winners

		
Freedom Quilt Year 2 New Horizons Primary	Rosa Parks Stop Motion Michaela All Faiths Children's Academy	Action not Words Paige Cedar Children's Academy

Secondary Winners

		
Growth Jessica Plympton Academy	Action not Words Sara Rochester Grammar School	Claudette Aaliyah and Louise Brixham College

Staff Winners

		
Still, I rise Mrs Charles Brixham College	Black History Month Crochet Ms Moncreaff New Horizons Primary	From tiny acorns mighty oak trees grow Mrs Whatling Strood Hub

THINKING SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

The Thinking Schools Academy Trust is fully committed to the requirements of equality legislation and will strive to go above and beyond for the benefit of all. Demonstrating through our curriculums, policies and actions we recognise, appreciate and value individual differences and aim to embed a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion across our organisation.

Thinking Schools Academy Trust
2022



#WeAreOne

Children in Need

#WeAreOne

Children in Need came shortly after Black History Month, with our school communities participating in a variety of fundraising activities to raise money for the children's charity. From bake sales and Pudsey parties to talent shows and fancy dress, we were delighted to raise a phenomenal £18,130!



A special well done has to go out to The Gordon Children's Academy for raising more than £9,000 through their Pudsey Run challenge - Outstanding work. As with all our events, there was a focus on promoting positive mental health and wellbeing through our "Beary Kind Acts" and by writing letters of encouragement for local charities that have previously benefited from CiN funding. All in all, it was another 'SPOTacular' event.

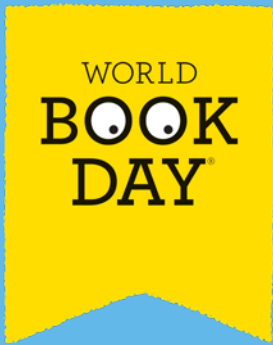


TSAT's GOLDEN TICKETS

In the run-up to the Christmas break, staff enjoyed a twist on our usual 12 days of Christmas celebrations. During the countdown, all of our staff received five scrumptious sweet treats, with one lucky winner from each school or office finding the Golden Ticket in each delivery.

The tickets gave the winners additional prizes ranging from an additional prize, ranging from Costa and Waterstone's gift cards to trips to Nandos and the cinema - great activities to enjoy during the festive period.





#WeAreOne



Illustration by Allen Fatimaharan

As always, World Book Day is a popular event for our children and young people across the Trust. This year, we have been focused on the importance of reading for leisure.

While our primary schools dressed in their pyjamas and brought their favourite bedtime reads to the daytime, our secondary schools talked about how reading can have a positive impact on your wellbeing – especially with their ongoing coursework deadlines and exam pressures.

We have seen some excellent entries for our Short Story competition too, where storytellers from our schools have submitted short stories that reflect the values of our schools. It has been excellent seeing everyone get creative and involved with this #WeAreOne day, which is precisely what our activities and events are all about.

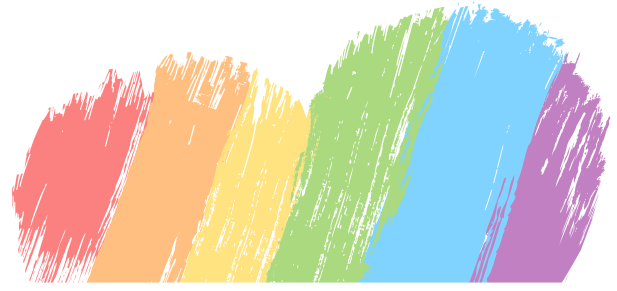




In February our Celebrations across the Trust brought us the colourful LGBTQ+ History Month.

The Trust saw rainbows, love hearts, and words of kindness to others and ourselves shared across our schools. LGBTQ+ History Month is an opportunity to teach our students to be kind and celebrate love in all of its forms. We were delighted to launch the event with a powerful statement from our Deputy CEO.

Our schools participated in the trust-wide “Be You” event on 10th February, a day to celebrate everything that makes us be’you’tiful. Students attended in colourful clothes and enjoyed a number of fun activities throughout the day, including “I am beautiful because” signs, dance parties, creating rainbows, colourful bunting, and more. On 24th February, schools enjoyed their rainbow menu’s too – a delicious array of multi-coloured food like rainbow salad, smoothies, and fruit. Bobbi Pickard, CEO of Trans in the City also showed support for our event with an inspiring video message, reflecting on her journey and sharing her story with our young people. The event was rounded off with a range of inclusive reading recommendations by LGBTQ+ authors, leading us nicely into our World Book Day event.





Goodwin students rejoice as they graduate from the Scholars Programme

At the beginning of the year, a selection of students from Goodwin Academy enrolled on to the Brilliant Club's Scholars Programme. This course is designed to "help students develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence to progress to the most competitive universities". (The Brilliant Club, 2023)

The programme helps students gain skills in critical thinking and written communication and improves their subject knowledge in a number of areas. According to the UCAS Evaluation in 2021, "Year 12 students who complete The Scholars Programme are statistically significantly more likely to apply and progress to a competitive university than students from similar backgrounds."

Over the months our students have been studying challenging courses on subjects that



look beyond the standard curriculum. These subjects are taught by PhD tutors, giving the students a taste of university-style learning, and involved researching and answering questions like "Germline gene editing is real.

How did humanity get to this point?" With this particular session, the students explored scientific discoveries, including CRISPR-CAS9 and Artificial

Reproductive Technology (ART), and gained an understanding of the changes in the landscape of bioethical discussion.

On top of the classes, our students enjoyed the opportunity to visit Goldsmiths University of London in October to attend a study skills session and an information, advice and guidance session from the university, as well as taking in a campus tour and meeting current students to learn more about student life in higher education. It was amazing to hear them come away from this trip feeling very inspired and motivated to succeed.



This is Goodwin's second year running this programme; the first cohort completed the programme based on "Symmetry, Symmetry Breaking, and Why the Universe Doesn't Annihilate Itself" with PhD tutor Lauren Martin in early 2022. Following the success of last year's students, we are thrilled that 100% of this year's group passed the programme with flying colours.

On Wednesday 8th February 2023, our students enjoyed a celebratory breakfast at school with their Headteacher, Mrs Moon, before travelling to London where they officially graduated at the Imperial College London.

Well done to everyone involved for this brilliant achievement!



Holcombe students start their Young Reporter Course with gusto!

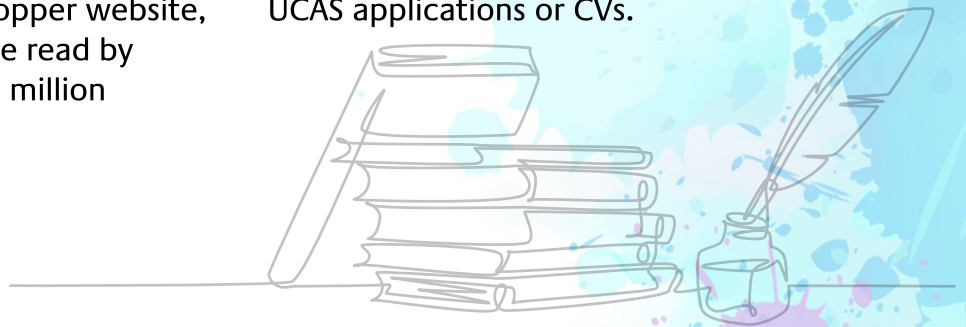


Four Year 12 students from Holcombe Grammar School in Chatham have enrolled on to the Young Reporter scheme, run by an external provider, News Shopper.

The Young Reporter Scheme is open to students in Years 10 to 13 and runs from January through to April. During this time our budding reporters are treated like real journalists, being given deadlines to work to and guidelines categories to write within, writing four articles overall. The articles are then published on the News Shopper website, where our students' work can be read by a monthly audience of up to 39 million subscribers.

Mentored by Miss Bloomfield, our students were tasked with their first assignment, which saw the aspiring journalists being sent into the local community to find their first news article to write about. These have now been published for everyone to see.

The Young Reporter Scheme enables our students to learn valuable skills that they can take beyond the school day and use in the modern world. What's more, the course, once completed, is a great addition to our students' UCAS applications or CVs.



Hundreds of children from three school communities dreamt big for Aspirations Day by dressing up and inviting parents and carers into the school to share stories about their job.



The national awareness week is designed to broaden children's understanding of the variety of careers they can aspire to have. It encourages individuals to discover the different job roles available across all different industries.

From police officers to vets, teachers and healthcare workers, children from across Meon Infant School, Meon Junior School, and Moorings Way Infant School dressed up as what they aspired to be.

Sara Paine, Executive Headteacher for all three schools, saw the day as a chance for everyone to come together and encourage one another to do their best in achieving their career goals.

She said: "It was wonderful to see the schools come together for this one event to learn more about the different types of careers and the possibilities that are endless for every child.

"I particularly enjoyed seeing our schools' welcome parents and carers into the school to share stories with the children about their jobs and why they are important in many different ways. This allowed us to teach the

children that whatever role someone has, each and every one of us has an important role to play in making a positive difference."

Visitors from various professions included an aircraft engineer, Royal Navy staff, computer programmer, and cabin crew.

At Meon Infant School, there was a visit from an actress and singer who sang 'Let it Go' from Disney's Frozen to all the children. Everyone joined in with two little girls dancing at the front dressed as Elsa.

A florist who visited the juniors really inspired many of the children, particularly with tales of being 'whisked off' in a helicopter to celebrity mansions to create all-flowers-bright-and-beautiful displays.

Moorings Way were lucky enough to have a visit from the local PCSO and children had a chance to sit in a police van!

"The team across all three settings did a superb job at coming together to play a vital role in supporting our children to develop their understanding and be their best selves. I'm already looking forward to our next joint event" Sara finished.



ASPIRe

Brixham College holds science spectacular for hundreds of Torbay school children

Hundreds of children from across Torbay had a day of mesmerising experiments following a science spectacular at Brixham College.

More than 600 children enjoyed the two-day Wonderstruck science show earlier this year and left amazed and inspired about the wonders of physics and chemistry.

The event saw ear-splitting explosions, fire-fuelled bangs, gunpowder, flames and smoke, a 10ft fireball, rocket building sessions, mind expanding science facts, and a demo of a working jet engine within the workshops.

Local primary schools that attended the event, which was supported by the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, included Furzeham Primary School and Nursery, Eden Park Primary School, Roselands Primary School, White Rock Primary School, Brixham Church of England School, St Margaret Clitherow Catholic Primary School, Collaton St Mary Primary School, and Galampton Church of England Primary School.

The event also presented the opportunity to showcase other STEM subjects and

make them relevant, fun and exciting for all ages.

Mark Eager, Principal at Brixham College, said it was brilliant to bring schools from across Torbay together. He said: “We are incredibly proud to deliver an education that challenges, inspires and excites our students so, welcoming Peter from Wonderstruck back to contribute towards this, was an absolute pleasure. We were delighted to have the opportunity to invite our community of primary schools to join us.”

One of the workshops on the day saw children build their own rocket, which was powered by compressed air. They use the same basic principles that send people to the moon, but use the power of air squeezed into a small space instead of a combustion reaction.



Peter Wright, of Wonderstruck, praised Brixham’s warm welcome and said it was good to be back. He said: “It’s always great to come back to Brixham. We’re guaranteed enthusiastic audiences and a really enjoyable event. It’s certainly one that we look forward to. Any event where we get a chance to engage with young people and inspire them to think about the wonder of science and how amazing the universe around us is worthwhile. The world is facing a lot of challenges at the moment and empowering young people to understand and help to meet those challenges is key to what we do.”

we remember with fondness, hopefully everybody who has seen Wonderstruck over the last two days will never forget it.”

Mandy Gage, Director of Education at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust for Torbay, praised the team who led the event, saying: “It has been wonderful to see Brixham College holding an event for other schools within the community. At the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, we’re all about transforming life chances of children and young people by inspiring them through many different ways. This Wonderstruck event is a perfect example of our passion to give pupils something to remember and learn from.”

Tom Norman, who is a teacher of Physics but also leads Computer Science at the college, said: “At Brixham College, we are passionate about Science and our community. That’s why we hold the amazing Wonderstruck event to give Year 5 students the opportunity to be wowed by science. Our hope is to ignite a lifelong love of asking questions about the world we live in and to build on the enthusiasm young people have to learn more about the universe.

“One of the highlights of the event is when young people can become rocket scientists for the day. Not only is this a great opportunity for our primary school students to learn outside of the classroom, our Year 7 students engaged with the activities too. After all, it is the experiences we have at school that



Medway Night Lights



In February, staff and students from our Medway primary schools joined their local communities to come together for a luminous occasion.

Medway Night Lights is a free festival of light that takes place across the Medway towns. Following the success from last year, which saw roughly 60,000 people in attendance, the festival returned, launching with the “We Love Chatham Lantern Parade” through Chatham High Street.

Thousands of people flocked to the street to witness and enjoy the event. More than 600 children from local schools, including New Horizons Children’s Academy, Cedar Children’s Academy, All Faiths Children’s Academy, and The Gordon Children’s Academy, marched in the parade. The students all displayed creativity and resilience when building their own lanterns which they carried throughout

the night, transforming the Chatham streets with their beautiful work. Their artwork showcased what the local young people love about Chatham, including birds and boats. The children thoroughly enjoyed the experience of learning from expert artists and creating the art pieces.

The evening was a spectacular occasion, and we are extremely proud of all of our students who took part. They were fantastic representatives for our Trust and our schools. Well done!



Thinking Fitness launches in Rochester



THINKING
fitness

In our last edition of Our Trust, we announced the opening of the new Thinking Fitness gym at Plympton Academy. Since then, we are proud to have launched two more gyms at The Rochester Grammar School and Brixham College!



Thinking Fitness at The Rochester Grammar School boasts newly built facilities, including a spacious sports hall, professional dance studio and fully-equipped gym area, as well as state-of-the-art fitness machines and equipment. As with all our Thinking Fitness gyms, Thinking Fitness Rochester is used by students during the day as part of their PE curriculum, and the students are greatly enjoying their brand-new sports centre. Members of Thinking Fitness Rochester and Thinking Fitness Chatham (on site at Holcombe Grammar School) have access to both sites included in their monthly memberships, and can attend a brilliant variety of classes across the two centres. From yoga and Pilates to HIIT and spin classes, there really is something for everyone.



Brixham College's sports facilities, formerly Brixham Sports Centre, opened in November 2022 as Thinking Fitness. The newly refurbished gym has had a huge makeover, including new cardiovascular and resistance equipment. From treadmills with interactive screens to fantastic squash courts, Thinking Fitness Brixham boasts a range of facilities available for the public to use at affordable prices. The gym also launched its first ever class timetable for its members this January, which is already hugely popular! One member at Thinking Fitness Brixham described it as "a great gym with informative staff and a pleasant, friendly atmosphere."

All Thinking Fitness gyms launched successful January campaigns and we are delighted to have welcomed so many new members across our four sites. Our Thinking Fitness model encourages members of the community to enjoy our schools' outstanding facilities with affordable memberships, whilst also supporting young people in their area; profits generated by Thinking Fitness gyms are recycled back into our Trust to maintain our facilities and enhance the educational experiences of our students.



Huge congratulations to our Thinking Fitness staff on two more successful gym launches; we wish you every success as your Thinking Fitness family continues to grow.

www.thinking-fitness.com

Construction begins on Maritime Academy in Frindsbury



Thinking Schools Academy Trust were delighted to be part of the official ground-breaking ceremony to celebrate the start of the building work on the much-anticipated Maritime Academy in Frindsbury.

Maritime Academy opened to students in September 2022, temporarily located in Twydall, with the new purpose-built site in Frindsbury due to open in Summer 2024. Maritime is helping to address the shortfall of secondary school places in Medway and will have the capacity to offer 1,150 student places to the community.

The ground-breaking ceremony was attended by a number of representatives from across the community. These included representatives from the Department for Education, Medway Councillor Martin Potter, the CEO of Thinking Schools Academy Trust, Stuart Gardner, the Director of Education for the Strood Hub, Jody Murphy, Head of School at Maritime Academy, Matt Evans, Board Member, Ashley Hall, Governor, Peter Martin with Chair of Governors, Gerard Newman.

The Maritime Academy's permanent site will be a home to state-of-the-art learning environment including a brand-new Thinking Fitness gym, open for students during the day and members of the public in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays. All profits generated by Thinking Fitness memberships will be recycled back into the Trust to support its mission of 'transforming life chances'.



Once completed, the new building will boast a range of exceptional and modern facilities, delivering on the Academy's ethos of 'making excellence a habit' and its mission to provide a first-class education where every young person in our community deserves to have the best opportunities at life regardless of their individual circumstances.

The construction, overseen by Bowmer + Kirkland, will deliver a carbon-neutral build. The Academy will house sustainable features such as LED lights, eco-friendly temperature control in the classrooms, electronic car charging points, bike racks, and recycling stations and will use responsibly sourced materials. The Academy's student drive team of Engineering Officers are involved with the building's sustainability planning and have been working on sustainability projects within their 'Horizon' enrichment periods, in their science lessons and via their community lunch topical discussions.



Jody Murphy, Director of Education for the Strood Hub, said:

“We have worked exceptionally hard to design an academy that supports our mission to offer a unique opportunity for students to learn in a modern setting with traditional values. Our new academy has been designed with our students and the wider environment in mind. To see work begin on this today is incredibly exciting for our staff, students and community. I cannot wait for our students and their education to benefit from such excellent facilities.”

Stuart Gardner, CEO of Thinking Schools Academy Trust, said:

“We are pleased to see groundwork begin on site as it marks an exciting moment in the Academy’s history. We are working closely with our partners from Bowmer + Kirkland, the Department for Education and Medway Council to build these new school facilities that will help not only provide much-needed school spaces in the region but ensure a high standard of learning for all.”





At TSAT, we are dedicated to creating a community that places an emphasis on recognising one another. A simple “thank you” can go a long way towards making someone else’s day, and when it comes from a colleague or peer, it takes on an even more meaningful significance.

We celebrated our first round of TSTARS Winners across the Trust in Term 3! These people were recognised for receiving the highest percentage of mentions in their Think Ahead check-ins during terms one and two. Our ‘Shining Star Award’ winners were presented by Stuart Gardner and Lee Miller and they look absolutely delighted!

“I don’t do the job I do for recognition, I do it because I love what I do, but sometimes a little recognition can make all the difference.”
 (Member of staff)

Congratulations to all our TSTARS last term!



Jimmy Carr	Maritime Academy	Shooting Star
Ann Simmons	Meon Infant School	Shining Star
Sam Poole	Central Services	Shining Star
Pete Goodchild	Plymouth High School for Girls	Shining Star
Diane Chamberlain	All Faiths Children's Academy	Shining Star
Charlotte Riddell	All Faiths Children's Academy	Rising Star
Julie Chubb	Central Services	Rising Star
Marion Hayes	Cedar Children's Academy	Rising Star
Angela Wells	Cedar Children's Academy	Rising Star
Jamie Blake	Central Services	Rising Star
Jordan Curling	Goodwin Academy	Rising Star
Ella Martin	Gordon Children's Academy	Rising Star
Alison Tanti	Holcombe Grammar	Rising Star
Joshua Oliver	Maritime Academy	Rising Star
Deborah Mundy	Meon Infant School	Rising Star
Shellie Knight	Meon Junior School	Rising Star
Rachel Thrupp	Meon Junior School	Rising Star
Coral Doughty	New Horizons Children's Academy	Rising Star
Jack Jones	New Horizons Primary School	Rising Star
Becky Dandy	Penbridge Infant School	Rising Star
Clare Selwood	Penbridge Junior School	Rising Star
Lynne Caddy	Plymouth High School for Girls	Rising Star
Annette Cook	Plymouth High School for Girls	Rising Star
Gemma Shattock	Plymouth High School for Girls	Rising Star
Chloe Doyle	Plympton Academy	Rising Star
Sarah Blackmore	The Portsmouth Academy	Rising Star
Lauren French	Rochester Grammar School	Rising Star
Michaela Steeples	The Victory Academy	Rising Star



MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK 2023

15th - 19th May

Anxiety



#WeAreOne

THINKING
YOU



THINKING
fitness



Chatham



Plympton

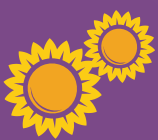


Rochester

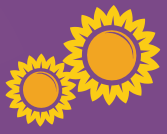


Brixham





Penbridge Infant School celebrates new playground with special guests after £90,000 investment



Children from Penbridge Infant School, in Portsmouth, were elated to greet three special guests to officially open their new playground.

The Lord Mayor of Portsmouth Councillor Hugh Mason, the Lady Mayoress Marie Costa, and Councillor Suzy Horton the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education were warmly welcomed with cheers from excited children in the Nursery and Reception year groups and young people from the school's inclusion unit, The Rainbow Centre, as they arrived to cut the ribbon to officially open the outdoor play space. Anna Webb, Headteacher at Penbridge School in Lincoln Road, Fratton, says the opening of the new play area is thanks to many hours of hard work and planning.

The £90,000 investment has secured a fantastic outdoor environment that will support pupils by promoting their physical health, enhancing their motor skills, developing their learning and teamwork abilities as well as enhancing their wellbeing.

Caroline Morris, Head of School at Penbridge Infant, says the outdoor area will make all the difference to every child who attends the school.

She said: "It has been lovely to welcome the Lord Mayor, Lady Mayoress, and Councillor Horton to the school to open our new playground. I'm so proud to see the whole school community enjoying this area."

"Some of our children don't have outdoor spaces to explore at home, so this will make a significant difference to the adventure they will experience every day at Penbridge."

Councillor Suzy Horton, explored the new playground by engaging with some children at the launch event.



She said: "We have had a desire to positively transform this playground for some time now and the day has finally arrived. It has been lovely to welcome our special guests to come and officially open the playground."

"What I love to see the most is the excitement on the children's faces when they can see the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress are important people coming to enjoy that moment of cutting the ribbon with them."

The school ripped out their tired climbing and play area towards the end of last year and replaced it with a vibrant and inspiring play and learning space.

She said: "It's wonderful to see the children loving their new outdoor spaces at Penbridge Infant School. I'm amazed at how brilliant it all looks. It's totally different to what I saw the last time I was here and the smiles on everyone's faces make it all worthwhile."



Plympton Academy students shine in the spotlight for impressive production of

Matilda

Crowds at Plympton Academy were entertained by astonishing wit and special powers as they enjoyed Matilda the Musical JR at the Plympton Academy in January.

The high-energy performance, held at the Academy's modern and vibrant auditorium, saw young people from the school and Sixth Form come together for the show.

The production, which ran over five nights with some matinee performances, welcomed three Matilda's to the stage: Lucy, Melita, and Kelsey from Year 7.

While the evening performances were open to the community to purchase tickets, several local schools were invited to the daytime shows. Matilda was a show for everyone to enjoy!

Jo Crook, the lead member of staff for drama at the Academy who directed the show, praised the three girls for their efforts in playing Matilda.

I'm really pleased with how everyone performed, actually. All of the hours, weekends and half terms put into making the event happen was fantastic. It is so good to see everything come alive.

"We are incredibly ambitious as a Academy so it was fantastic to see everyone enjoying this moment. We've always said that we don't wish to double or triple our cast, because you then need to teach the role two or three times over, but we believe in giving as much opportunity to those who are deserving of being in the role."

Lucy, Melita, and Kelsey each brought something unique to the role of Matilda with numerous opportunities to learn from each other.





Lucy said it was a fun role to play with an opportunity to meet many different people. She said: "I made some new friends, including people from the Sixth Form. I have been in shows with and away from the Academy which included dance. For me, the trick to learning all my lines was by getting support from my sister."

While for Melita, it was her first time in a principle role within a production, saying: "It can be a little scary playing a main role, as you are in front of lots of people, but it's exciting at the same time. On one hand, you are prepared to mess up but not prepared at the same time. It's very much a 'the show must go on' moment. It's a very surreal but great experience."

Melita recalled one of her favourite memories being when Josh, a Sixth Form student who played Mrs Trunchbull, gave a perfect cartwheel in the main performance. This

wasn't how it turned out in the rehearsals, but the result was perfect at the main event.

The announcement for those who were selected to play the various roles was sent out school-wide. Kelsey was ecstatic when she saw her name beside the role of Matilda, saying: "I almost couldn't believe it. It was really exciting that I was sharing the role with Lucy and Melita too. I loved how we could all bring something different to the role, for example we all sang a little differently, but the memories I have made will always stay with me."

Watch this space is the message from Plympton Academy ahead of their next show. They have some ideas in the pipeline, but nothing to share at this moment in time...



“We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep”

Students from All Faiths Children's Academy Drama Club recently performed their rendition of Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' in front of the entire school.

The actors were charismatic and comedic, producing a number of laughs from the children and staff watching the show. They did a fantastic job, bringing one of Shakespeare's famous plays to life.

Mrs Venter, Assistant Headteacher of All Faiths, said a few words at the end of the performance, saying, "This is the part where we shout for an encore, we want more! That was absolutely fabulous! I had to blink when everyone started clapping, as I was beginning to think I was in the West End and not at All Faiths Children's Academy.

"You have all done a brilliant job. I know you have put in a lot of hard work, most of it in your own time. Well done to Mrs Wilkinson and everyone involved, let's give them another round of applause."



Following this, students across the school were encouraged to produce work inspired by the performance for their Tempest Exhibition, which took place on Thursday 9th February. Parents were invited to join the school to enjoy the event. In the main hall a number of creative displays were showcased, from boats on sunset waters and stormy seas to newspaper articles and wave drawings.

Well done to the staff and students involved, it was a joyfully comedic show that was enjoyed by everyone in attendance.



Year 12 students from The Rochester Grammar School win the Bar Mock Trial Regional Heat competition

Year 12 students from The Rochester Grammar School in Medway entered a team into the Regional Heats of the Bar Mock Trial Competition at the University of Kent on Saturday 14th January 2023.

The Bar Mock Trial Competition is designed to help young people, aged 15 to 18 years old, understand how the law touches every aspect of their lives, thus gaining insight into how the legal justice system works.



Throughout the process, students are encouraged to think critically and build arguments while having the opportunity to interact with legal professionals. The competition helps to develop students' employability skills and a sound knowledge and understanding of the role of law and the justice system in our society.

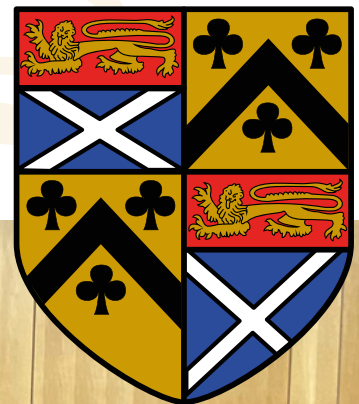


The students worked hard to prepare for the competition since mid-November, picking apart two hypothetical trials and then arguing for either the prosecution or defence against other competing schools in Kent. The heats took place at the University of Kent in front of real judges.

Through hard work, determination, and carefully thought out cases, the team from Rochester Grammar came away victorious, being awarded the title of Bar Mock Trial Regional Heat Winner 2023.

This is an exceptional achievement for the students and the first step toward the National Final, which takes place at the Old Bailey later this year.

A huge congratulations to every member of the team!



Making learning last through digital transformation reveals positive response from schools

Since introducing one:one devices within primary and secondary schools across the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, lessons have unsurprisingly evolved and engagement amongst students has increased too.

By implementing laptops into the classroom and offering some students with the opportunity to own their own device, our Trust is playing a critical role in closing the digital divide and providing children and young people with the essential digital skills they need to thrive in the future.

Most importantly, our one:one programme is all about ‘Making Learning Last’, and we’re seeing exactly that in all the settings with devices.

At The Portsmouth Academy, they are approaching the end of their second full year of using one:one devices within the school. Currently, they have Year 7 and Year 8 pupils benefiting from the innovative scheme and have been recognised by Microsoft as a Showcase School – the only one within the Trust with this prestigious mark.

The Hampshire-based Academy has big plans for the future of its one:one scheme, so we caught up with Karla Barnes, Digital Learning Ambassador at The Portsmouth Academy, to hear all about what she thinks of one:one.

“The devices put everyone on a level playing field” she said, “People shouldn’t feel disadvantaged because they don’t have access to technology, when technology is going to be in every job they have when they leave school. At The Portsmouth Academy, we talk about future-ready skills which are incredibly important.”

In a recent survey, 96% of students using their HP Probook x360 have confidence using their device, while 92% of students believe the devices have improved their learning.

Miss Barnes acknowledged everyone has different learning styles and these computers are accommodating peoples’ preferences to absorbing important information.

She said: “There are so many different learning styles and the children can use their devices in such a way that works for them. This has made all the difference; there’s not just one learning style when using these devices, you can tailor the style very much to the individual and that helps the students learn.”



As a result of these devices, the average reading progress score for Year 7 students increased by 13 months, while it was 10 months for those in Year 8.

Karla continued: “I’m really pleased with how things are developing around one:one devices at The Portsmouth Academy. Since being awarded our Microsoft Showcase School accreditation, it does feel that we are more unified in our approach to delivering technological education. I know there’s Google Classroom, but with Microsoft everyone is confident about its benefits. It feels familiar – even if people don’t know something about the system – using and working with Microsoft is like a warm hug so I’m excited for the future.”

Elsewhere within the Thinking Schools Academy Trust, Maritime Academy in Kent embraced the one:one way of teaching and learning when they opened in September 2022. As a new school, they have an exciting window of opportunity to interact and engage with the devices that's new for all.

They have approached one:one as an investment in the future of education, and as an initiative that is the start of a new and exciting era for the Maritime Academy.



Mr Jimmy Carr, Assistant Principal at Maritime Academy and lead for the one:one Scheme at the school says “We believe one:one devices in our lessons will give students access to the latest technology to support their learning, in preparation for the next steps in their lives after education and promote our ethos of academic excellence.”

Maritime Academy have Year 7 students using their Microsoft Surface SE devices. Through the effective use of technology, the school believe that learning is not just something that happens within the classroom – it is something that transcends the uniform and the text book and stays with students once they have left school.

Jimmy explains that “Technology is an influential part of young people’s lives and we want to support students to become digitally literate and support their development to become good digital citizens. The Maritime Academy will use one:one devices to assist with our Maritime ‘5’ Waves of Learning so each classroom has a consistent approach to enable academic excellence to flourish.”

He continues to say “From day one of Year 7, students at the Maritime Academy will all receive a one:one device, so that they can benefit from a curriculum that has been developed with digital learning at its core. Learning with one:one devices is about investing in the right equipment, using modern learning techniques, offering a blended approach, teaching vital skills and trusting students to work and learn independently.”



The students have taken to working digitally extremely well. Lola, one of the founding Year 7 students at Maritime reflects “It is so much easier using a device than writing all the answers and sticking sheets of paper into my book and it helps me to look back at the work we have recently completed to support me with my next projects and assignments.” Fellow Year 7 Franklin describes the pride they have in being given the responsibility to look after the device, while Aaryan says “I really like using my one:one device because when I use Carousel, I can look at my previous answers. If I was wrong, we would discuss it and get to the right answer so next time I will get the answer correct.”



Furzeham Primary & Nursery School is recognised for English and Maths excellence in final year of national award



Children from Furzeham Primary School and Nursery have been celebrating excellence in their English and mathematics provision after being re-accredited by a national organisation by receiving the Quality Mark.

The Quality Mark aims to focus educational organisations to undertake effective self-evaluation and continuous improvement for English and mathematics, which drives better outcomes for pupils, their families and society.

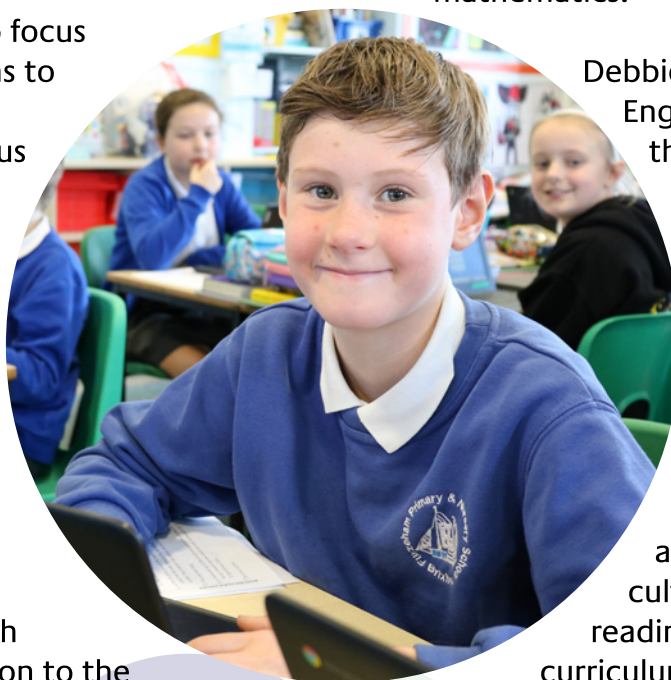
Claire Thompson, the Deputy Head at the school, says it's great for the school to be recognised for providing a strong English and mathematics provision to the children.

She said: "It's fantastic that Furzeham has once again been acknowledged for having a strong depth of knowledge and understanding of school strengths around our English and mathematics provision.

"As a Senior Leadership Team, we have worked with children and pupils, all staff and leaders to develop what we think is a very strong base of basic skills of all areas of our curriculum.

"The Quality Mark has recognised us as passionate about providing opportunities to improve for all, with very high expectations for all pupils."

The Quality Mark Framework has been developed in consultation with local councils, academy trusts, practitioners and educational experts with a focus on promoting and celebrating improved and strong English and mathematics.



Debbie Hewitt, who leads English at the school, says the main focus hasn't been developing the curriculum of specific topics, but all areas of learning.

She said: "Over the last 18 months, we have had a main focus across the school of developing a whole school reading culture and ensuring that reading is at the centre of our curriculum.

"As part of that process and journey we have been developing a whole class reading approach, ensuring the explicit teaching of vocabulary, fluency and comprehension skills and also the opportunity for the children to apply those skills in different activities.

"We were absolutely thrilled when the basic skills Quality Mark made that a key strength of our award and accreditation."

Despite the school being accredited for its Quality Mark for another year, this will be the last accreditation as the scheme is coming to a close after more than 25 years.

The news comes due to the rise in popularity of multi academy trusts and collaboration and partnerships between schools focusing on improvements from within, deeming the award less important.

Genna Chapman, who oversees the mathematics provision at the school, said: “Our focus at Furzeham is to equip children with a solid mathematical understanding of place, value and number. It is fundamental that children have both the conceptual and procedural understanding of calculations.

“The use of manipulatives for children to have a concrete understanding is so key and so models, images, and representations are considered and used throughout all the year groups in the school. This consistency and progression have been noted by the Quality Mark.”



The Victory Academy & New Horizons Children's Academy Arts Awards

The Victory Academy rejoices as 63 of their Year 8 students receive their Arts Award Bronze qualification!

The Arts Award is a set of arts-related qualifications that can be earned by all children and young people under the age of 25. It is run by Trinity College London and Arts Council England. The awards offer five levels of qualifications: Discover, Explore, Bronze, Silver, and Gold, and can be awarded for any art form, from music to mime, painting to pottery and dancing to drawing.

To gain the Bronze Award, students had to actively participate in an art form of their choice, experience at least one arts event and review it, research the career and work of

an artist or craftsman of their choice, and pass on an art skill. This Level 1 qualification is designed for young people aged 11 to 14 and typically takes 60 hours to complete. It got students involved in the arts as both creators and audience members, and it encouraged them to start their paths to becoming leaders by teaching others what they had learned.

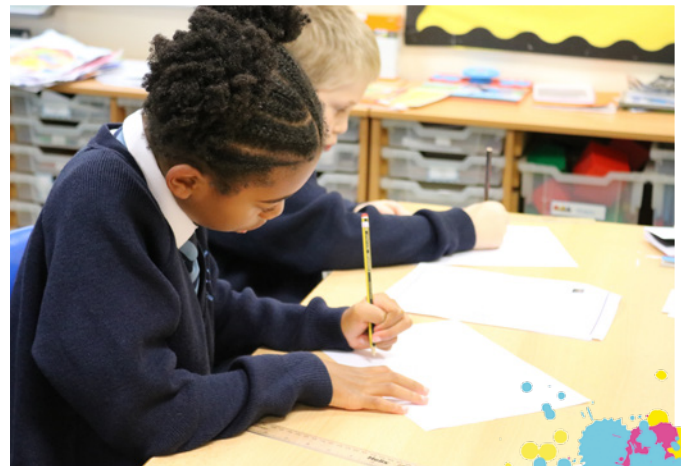


We have a strong focus on the arts across our Trust, with a number of our schools gaining Artsmark Awards at varying levels. The Victory Academy is proud to be an Artsmark Platinum School, dedicated to cultural entitlement and opportunity for all young people, particularly those who are at a disadvantage.

New Horizons Children's Academy in Chatham is also on their Art Awards journey. In January, children in the school took part in a number of creative activities as part of their Arts Day, with students in Year 1 completing their Arts Award Discover Award and Year 5 completing their Arts Award Explore Award.

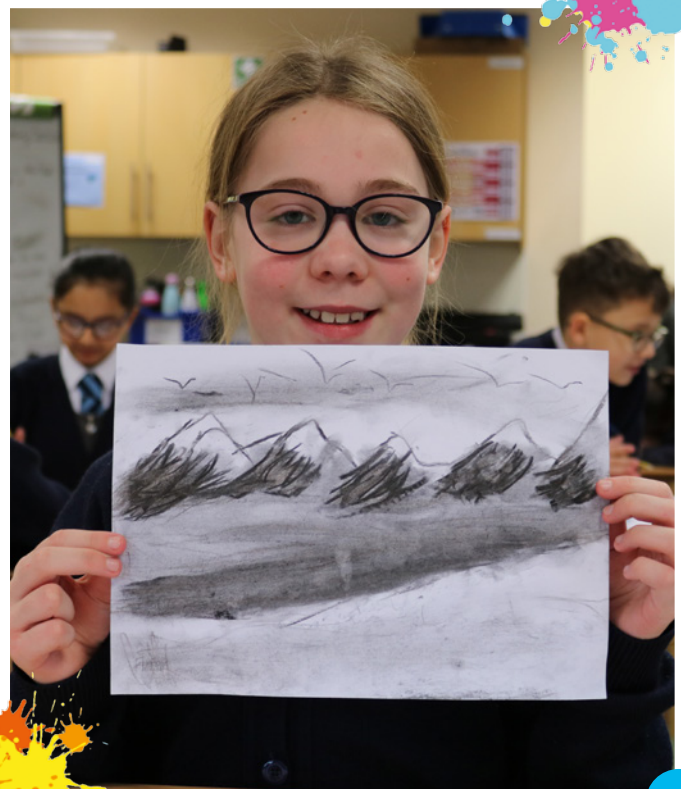
The Discover Award is designed for children aged 5 and above, encouraging them to explore the arts all around them, research different artists, and develop their knowledge and understanding of the arts. It inspires children's creativity, curiosity and confidence, boosting their communication skills through discussing their discoveries with their peers. During Arts Day, Year 1 students identified a wide variety of art forms by going on a discovery walk around the school building and conducting their own research. Following this, the children explored the alternative art form of 'marbling' and learned about the work and significance of Yayoi Kusama, creating their own artwork inspired by the style of this artist.

This means that 100% of students at New Horizons Children's Academy in Years 1-6 have achieved the Discover certificate, and 100% of students in Years 5-6 have completed the Explore certificate.



The goal of the Explore Award is to get children interested in different kinds of art and artists and to help them find their own style and creativity. Year 5 experimented with 'wax resistant' art and 'charcoal sketching'. These are alternative art forms outside of what is offered in the national curriculum. The students researched the artist Keith Haring and created their own artwork inspired by the style of this artist. The students then used their knowledge and understanding gained throughout the qualification to create a final piece of art.

Following the hard work from Arts Day in January, the children's work has been assessed by Trinity College London, and we are proud to share that all students in Years 1 and 5 passed their levels and achieved their Art Award qualifications.



Young Voices



Music enthusiasts from across the Thinking Schools Academy Trust enjoyed an experience of a lifetime by attending two events that bring children together to create the largest youth choir in the world.

Pupils at Furzeham Primary & Nursery School in Devon attended Young Voices 2023 at the Resorts World Arena in Birmingham earlier this year, while young singers from Cedar Children's Academy, The Gordon Children's Academy, All Faiths Children's Academy and New Horizons Children's Academy joined thousands of others at the O2 Arena in London.

Young Voices aims to bring teachers and their students together to provide an educational and live performance experience everyone will remember for the rest of their lives.

Many of the children from across our Devon and Kent schools have never experienced a spectacular on such a scale before. Some haven't even left their hometown!

Danielle Tooley, who supports with leading the choir at Furzeham Primary School, said the events are more than just a children's choir.

She said: "Young Voices is a music education on a massive scale, it's absolutely fantastic. It's not just simply a children's choir concert, it's the largest concert of this type in the world. The choir at Furzeham were given the opportunity to sing alongside some famous people. To see the smiles on their faces is amazing."

Celebrities at the Birmingham event which Furzeham attended included Heather Small from dance band M People, The Beatbox Collective, and Tony Hadley.

Polly Booth, one of the teachers at Furzeham who attended the event, said: "For the staff attending the event, it's wonderful to see the children with smiles on their faces while they are singing. It's something that stays with you and you will never forget, it's a truly incredible experience."



Young Voices has staged full-scale arena concerts with first-class production value across the nation for more than 25 years. Since launching, hundreds of children from across the Trust have enjoyed their events with more than two million passing through the doors of their shows.

Collectively, children from four of our Kent-based schools joined roughly 20,000 children at the singing and dancing event that captivates young minds at the O2 Arena in London.

Even though some schools from our Trust across Devon and Kent came together for two separate Young Voices events, they were unified in the songs and dances they shared.

Each school is sent a pack ahead of their afternoon in the spotlight to support children and staff with learning the words and dances to the songs.

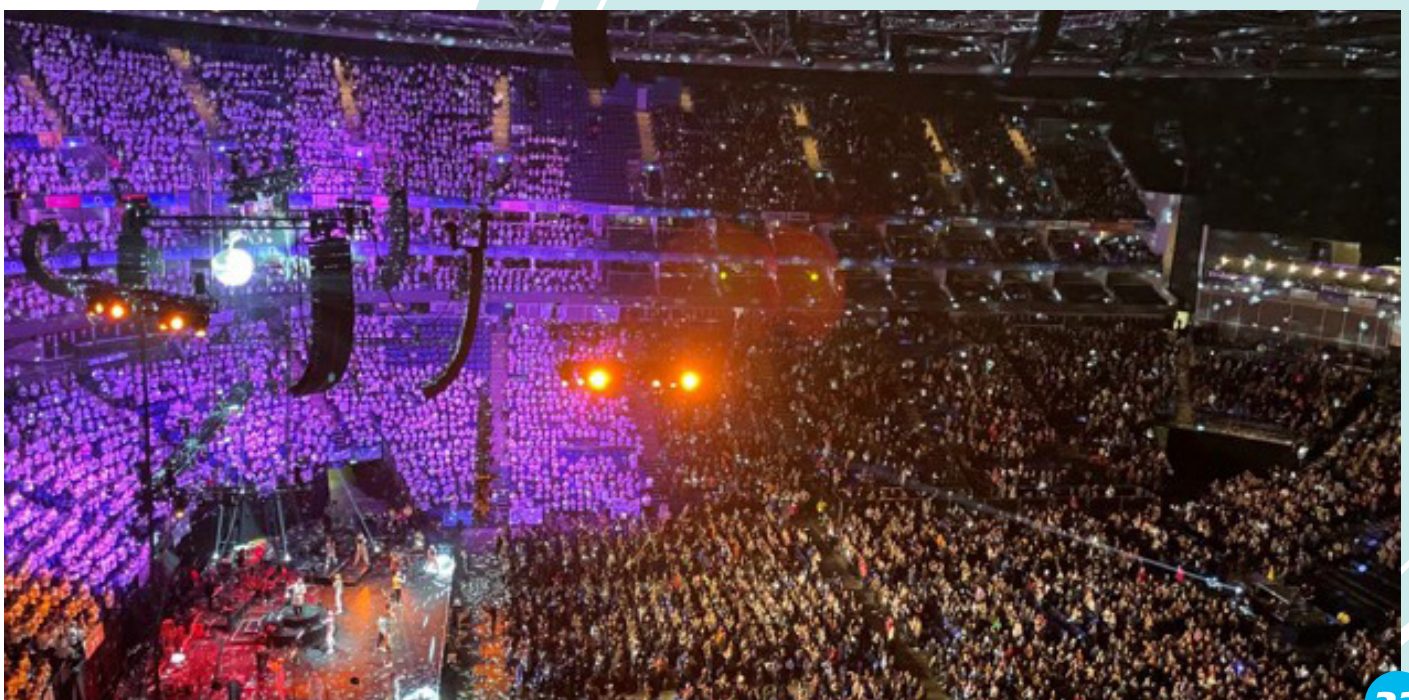
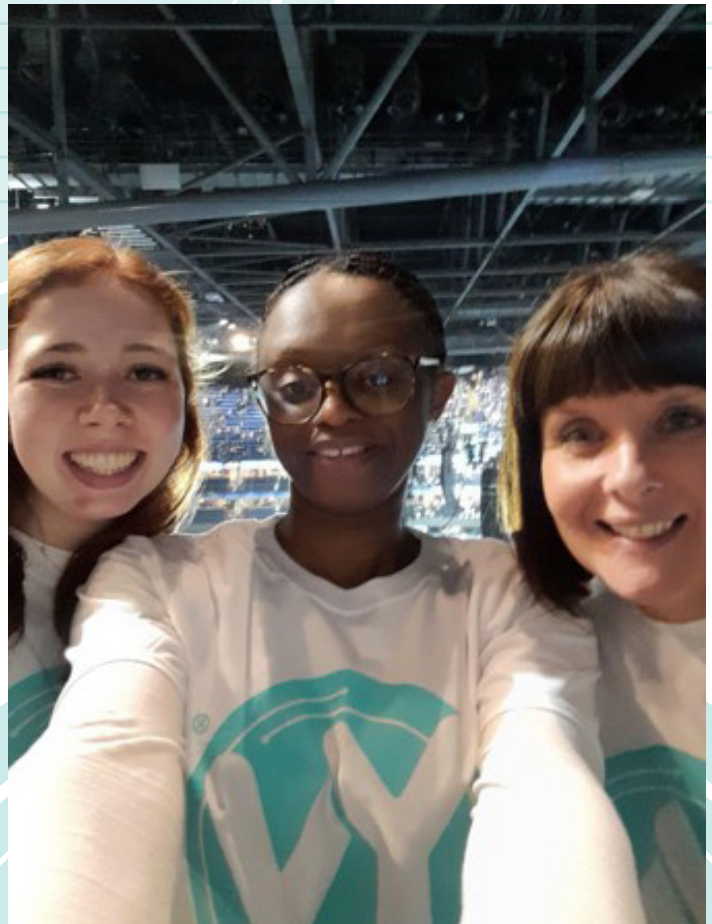
Xavier-Cope, of New Horizons Children's Academy, believes attending this experience is not only an unforgettable journey for children, but an unforgettable memory parents will hear all about.

They said: "The concert started at 7pm and we got to sing our hearts out and we even got to sing with Heather Small! We were all having

a wonderful time and it was great to see the children enjoying themselves."

Young Voices strive to introduce music to children that might be new to them but spark a sense of nostalgia for the parents.

Find out more by going to <https://www.youngvoices.co.uk/>



Celebrations all round for Thinking School Accreditations

There's a lot to celebrate at the Thinking Schools Academy Trust during the last few months with four of our schools having been awarded levels of Thinking School status by the University of Exeter. Congratulations to New Horizons Primary School in Portsmouth for achieving Level 1 Thinking School recognition and to Holcombe Grammar School, The Rochester Grammar School, and Penbridge Junior School for being awarded Advanced Thinking School status.

The Trust takes pride in its unique and effective approach to learning and education. Students are provided with the skillset and tools they need to think in a variety of ways and become lifelong learners. These transferable Thinking Tools prepare young people for a range of situations, dilemmas and circumstances that they may face later in life as part of modern society.

Thinking Schools at Exeter leads the way in research in Metacognition, Thinking Skills, Creativity and Dialogue in Education - providing a structure for schools to become recognised Thinking Schools. All four schools have worked hard to weave this framework into everyday life at their schools and this was recognised with New Horizons Primary being awarded their Level 1.

To achieve Level 2 Thinking accreditation to become an Advanced Thinking School, the academies were assessed on; Dissemination of Practice, Evaluative Research, Professional Development, Differentiation, and Whole School Assessment. These areas identify the school's continued work to support lifelong learning and holistic growth for all students. Holcombe Grammar School started their Thinking Journey back in 2019, when they were awarded Level 1, Thinking School status, and have since continued to build



on their practices to gain Level 2 as have Penbridge Junior School who were accredited as an Advanced Thinking School in October 2019. Whereas, The Rochester Grammar School has a “long history of Thinking School development and accreditation and has been at the core of the Thinking School movement for many years”.

All four schools have fully embedded Thinking Skills into their teaching, assessment, evaluation, and staff development which was recognised throughout the reports. The University of Exeter documented, “[Rochester Grammar’s] cognitive education development journey has moved forward unswervingly since its previous accreditation [...] The school has embedded thinking and meta-cognitive approaches in all aspects of school life in order to ensure that its aims and ethos are a reality.”

Holcombe has developed their work with the Thinking Skills to progress up to a Level 2 Thinking School, with the report explaining “Thinking Skills are fully embedded in the culture of the school such that Holcombe is a collaborative educational community. The dissemination of best practice across the school and beyond positions [the school] as a beacon of metacognitive excellence where best practice is nurtured so that children develop as holistic lifelong learners. The focus on the professional growth of staff is exceptional.”



Principal of Holcombe Grammar School, Lee Preston, says *“The staff at Holcombe work tirelessly to transform the life chances of our students, support their progress and develop their thinking. I couldn’t be prouder that the University of Exeter’s School of Education recognises the commitment we have for our young people and awarded us the Advanced Thinking School accreditation. Thank you to everyone involved who worked so hard to achieve this award.”*

Both grammars have been praised for their high aspiration and achievement for students, with the Thinking Schools at Exeter report stating *“What sets Holcombe aside from many schools, is its emphasis on how this is achieved. [...] the school seeks to make learning active by developing children as creative, adaptable, and resilient thinkers so that they become committed lifelong learners.”* The report was extremely complimentary toward Rochester Grammar’s continued deliverance of excellence explaining that *“[Rochester Grammar] is clearly a school that prides itself in achieving and maintaining the highest educational standards [...] it is a school where every individual is encouraged to achieve excellence and this is captured well in its ethos statements: ‘Excellence for All’, ‘Raising Aspirations’, ‘Delivering Excellence’, and ‘Transforming Life Chances’.”*

Clare Brinklow, Principal of The Rochester Grammar School, says *“We could not be prouder to be reaccrdited as an Advanced Thinking School. Thinking is at the heart of everything we do and it enables us to provide unique and rich experiences to our young people. We aim to deliver excellence for all and this accolade is a part of that journey. Thank you and well done to all of our incredible staff who continue to deliver passionate teaching for our students. This would not be possible without you.”*

WHITE HAT



YELLOW HAT



BLACK HAT



RED HAT



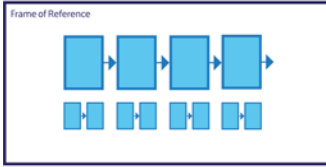
GREEN HAT



BLUE HAT



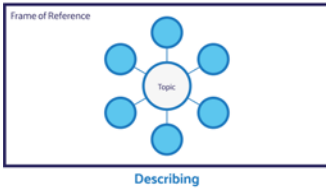
FLOW MAP



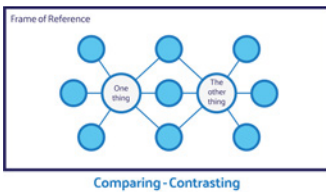
CIRCLE MAP



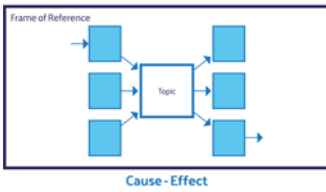
BUBBLE MAP



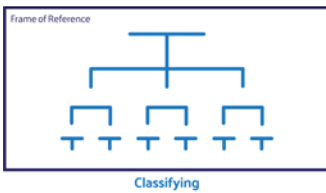
DOUBLE BUBBLE MAP



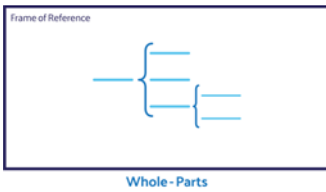
MULTI FLOW MAP



TREE MAP



BRACE MAP



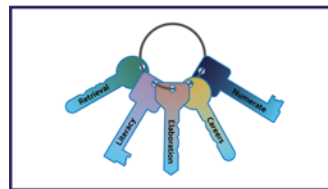
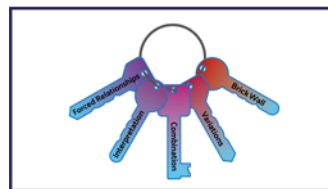
BRIDGE MAP



Dr Dave Walter from Thinking Schools at Exeter concluded the reports saying *“the application has provided compelling and comprehensive evidence for [Advanced] accreditation, [...] Congratulations to Holcombe Grammar School for an exceptional achievement!”* while *“Rochester Grammar School is an exceptional school and stands as a model of meta-cognitive excellence for others to emulate.”*

This is a proud moment for both schools and is the result of the continued hard work staff and students put into understanding and applying the Thinking School ethos to all aspects of school life. “Thinking Skills approaches are continually evaluated throughout the school and staff are routinely asked to reflect on their use of Thinking Tools.” The schools will continue to grow through staff development and training, and embedding cognitive education to supporting their students in becoming skilled, independent, and reflective learners.

THINKING KEYS



Let's talk about

Men's Health

Speaking about our troubles can be difficult for anybody. Men don't always feel comfortable to open up about life's challenges and their mental health.

If you know someone who may be going through a tough time, try reaching out with **ALEC**.

A

Start by **asking** how he's feeling. It's worth mentioning any changes you've picked up on. Maybe he's spending more time at the bar, has gone quiet in the group chat, or isn't turning up to social events. Whatever it is, he's just not himself.

Use a prompt like, "**You haven't seemed yourself lately - are you feeling OK?**"

L

Give him your full attention. Let him know you're hearing what he's saying and you're not judging. You don't have to diagnose problems or offer solutions, but asking questions lets him know you're **listening**.

Ask a question like, "**That can't be easy - how long have you felt this way?**"

E

Help him focus on simple things that might improve how he feels. Is he getting enough sleep? Is he exercising and eating well? Maybe there's something that has helped him in the past - it's worth asking.

Suggest that he **share how he's feeling with others he trusts**. This will make things easier for both of you. And if he has felt low for more than two weeks, **encourage** him to chat to his doctor.

C

Suggest you catch up soon - **check-in** in person if you can. If you can't manage a meet-up, make time for a call, or drop him a message. This helps to show that you care; plus, you'll get a feel for whether he's feeling any better.



THINKING SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST

THINKING
YOU



TSATs
WEEK

SAVE THE DATES
5TH - 9TH JUNE



THINKING SCHOOLS
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